

## DOES THE SKINK, *MABUYA MULTIFASCIATA*, OCCUR IN AUSTRALIA?

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In the collection of reptiles at the Australian Museum, Sydney, there is a significant specimen of *Mabuya multifasciata* (Fig. 1). The specimen, which is registered as R.9002, purportedly was collected in Darwin, Northern Territory.

This is significant because neither the species nor the genus of skinks have been recorded from Australia (Cogger, 1983).

The description of the specimen is as follows:

The distance from the tip of the snout to the vent is 115 mm; the width of the head is 20mm; the tail is incomplete. Supranasals are present and these nearly meet in the midline of the body. There are seven supralabials; the fifth is the largest and positioned below the eye. Above the eye, there are six supraciliaries. The parietals are separated. There are four, small, pointed lobules on the leading edge of the ear opening. The scales in the mid-dorsal area are tricarinated. Around the midbody there are 32 rows of scales; from the nuchals to a point above the vent there are 43 rows. On the longest toe of the hind foot there are 21 subdigital lamellae. The specimen is brown and faded and no pattern is obvious.

This description matches that given for *M. multifasciata* by Horton (1973). He said the species occurred in Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia (including West Irian). It has not been recorded in Papua New Guinea (Scott, Parker and Menzies, 1977).



Fig. 1

Does the existence of this specimen mean that *M. multifasciata* should be added to the list of Australian fauna? For the present I do not think the action is warranted. The specimen was purchased in 1926 from 'Frank Ardill'. Since that time there has been no other record. From my experience in Malaysia, *M. multifasciata* was a wary lizard, but it certainly could not have been described as 'cryptic'. One would have expected other records of such a big skink if it lived around Darwin. Most likely the specimen was accidentally introduced, probably in cargo from the islands to the north in Indonesia. There is also the possibility that the locality is incorrect. Unfortunately this is impossible to check. Other than the data in the register of the Australian Museum, no more information is available.

The record however, cannot be ignored. The locality is definite. In the case of *Lamprolepis smaragdina* the presence of that skink could be disregarded because the locality, 'Point Cook, Cooktown, Queensland', did not exist (Ingram and Parker, 1977). *M. multifasciata* looks similar to the Australian skink, *Egernia frerei* (see Cogger, 1983, for illustrations and description). There is a possibility *M. multifasciata* has been overlooked because of this resemblance. The two species can be readily separated by looking for supranasal scales: *M. multifasciata* has them, *E. frerei* does not.

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## References

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